

## *Blessing of the Healing Hands: Navy Chaplains Minister During National Nurses Week*

On 13 May 2002, the Navy Nurse Corps celebrated 94 years of caring. Involved in all aspects of Navy Medicine, Navy Nurses have had a tremendous impact in the areas of healthcare enhancement, wellness and TRICARE implementation. As leaders in creating healthcare teams, these compassionate and dedicated men and women have used their hands in the healing process of our Sea Service personnel and their families through the total quality care they provide.

To recognize Navy Nurses as valued members of our healing team, chaplains at Naval Hospitals Beaufort and Lemoore, as well as Naval Medical Center Portsmouth (NMCP), visited nurses in their workspaces during National Nurses Week in May. The chaplains offered an individual blessing on the nurse's healing hands and efforts. This was "a way for us to take time to recognize and remember the important work you do as nurses," said Capt. Jerry Shields, NMCP command chaplain. "It's not just a religious experience connected with one church or faith, it is a spiritual, non-denominational experience. It dates back to the ancient practice of anointing the head and hands of kings to acknowledge tremendous power and responsibility. It can also be associated with the parable of the Good Samaritan where a traveler going along a road stopped to help the stranger who was in need of healing."

This simple time of commitment only took a couple of minutes with each nurse. It reminded them of the power of the care they give to all and of the ultimate healing power which rests in God's hands.



God, I pray that you would bless these hands of \_\_\_\_\_ that will be used to help each patient today, and may they always be dedicated to bringing help, encouragement and wholeness to all they touch. Bless this nurse with your healing touch that his touch will be yours. May this blessing be a reminder that there is more to his job than just paperwork—and that is healing, the healing that comes from the human care of \_\_\_\_\_. Please clothe him with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience and grant wisdom for the many tasks that his hands will do. Guide this Navy nurse, O Lord, to live out his own sense of calling as both a caregiver and a naval officer, a husband and a father. All blessing and honor to you, our dear Lord, now and forever. Amen.

(Prayer offered by Chaplain Lisa Bohannon)

As part of National Nurses Week, I made my rounds, showing appreciation for nurses in a ritual that demonstrated God's love for them and their efforts. I took anointing oil of blessing and made the sign of a cross with these words: "(Nurse's name), may the work of your hands bring healing to all the people you touch. May God who formed these hands guide them to bring the healing touch of life. May God richly bless you."

Many of the nurses were especially moved by this caring gesture. A few shed tears after the blessing and said, "I have never been appreciated like this before, it's wonderful to have you here, Chaplain." One civilian nurse seeing this ritual said, "Can I have my hands blessed too, even though I'm not an active duty nurse?"

I held her hands and blessed them. She returned this caring spirit by giving me a hug. It was a very spiritually meaningful and "touching" experience.

Chaplain Mil Yi



#### Some links on "Blessing of Hands":

<http://www.nurseweek.com/features/00-06/parish.html>

<http://www.ahna.org/events/fnight.html>

<http://www.abh.org/blesshands.htm>

<http://www.chiroweb.com/archives/16/14/24.html>

### A Prayer for Physicians

by Chaplain Jane F. Vieira

*ETERNAL GOD, GREAT PHYSICIAN, as we bow our heads in prayer,  
we ask your blessing upon the hands of all physicians ...  
hands which have held new life and eased pain,  
which have offered compassion in life's darkest moments,  
performed surgeries and administered medicine,  
anointed the sick and bandaged the wounded,  
comforted the dying and held the dead.  
Blessed be the hands of all physicians, Lord,  
for they do the work of your hands.  
Amen.*